

Dear Honorable Chair Young and Committee Members,

My name is Dawn Hayes. I am the mother of Alexandra Hayes. Thank you for the chance to speak to you all this afternoon at this esteemed Committee meeting regarding House Bills 4320 and 4387.

This is the bedroom where our 19-year-old daughter who has Down Syndrome was assaulted. The predator did not enter through a door or window. The evil came through an electronic device.

This is her beautiful smile at the age of the assault.

A parental nightmare...this is the devastation she felt learning she was a victim of an on-line predator. In one 11-minute contact on a social media platform, a predator stole her smile. The predator compelled, harassed, forced, and exploited her. With a chronological age of 19 and an IQ of 65, she was paralyzed by fear. Her impairment left her unable to find the skills to maneuver this unwanted, horrific encounter. Allie's predator admitted under oath that she was targeted because she has an intellectual disability and because she would be easy to trick. Like many predators in Michigan, it is commonly known that this population is unprotected, so they are in one offender's words, "A predator's dream." As a result, she was diagnosed with PTSD and received weekly treatment for a year. Allie was filled with fear, sadness and we too were devastated.

Allie was no longer herself. Doing things like going to work, being a special Olympian and riding her bike did not bring her joy anymore.

Online sexual abuse is never the fault of a vulnerable adult; it is always the fault of the offender who has committed a serious sexual crime...UNLESS you live in MICHIGAN. Right now, in our great state... a predator *can* harass, abuse, threaten, compel, force, coerce, or exploit the vulnerability of a vulnerable adult in a manner that causes the VA to provide that person or any other person sexually explicit photos ---and it is **not** a crime. Please trust me; I speak from experience.

You may be wondering, "How big a problem is this?" According to an article dated February 17th, 2022, in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, one study of adults with an intellectual disability diagnosis found that 48.1% of sampled women, experienced sexual assault in their lifetime. Your constituents want you to help modernize the Michigan penal code, so we improve the safety of people with I/DD who live in Michigan and use the internet.

If you are wondering whether an unwanted on-line sexual encounter is truly an assault, make no mistake, sexual abuse can happen fully on-line with zero in person contact and Michigan is behind 32 states who already protect their vulnerable populations with modernized legislation. As recently as March of 2021, clarification on what defines sexual abuse was provided by the Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities stating, "sexual abuse is defined as unwanted sexual activity of any kind, with perpetrators using force, bribery or coercion, making threats or taking advantage of victims who are unable to give consent due to young age,

immaturity, or cognitive impairment.” Although usually unreported by vulnerable adults, sexual abuse can and DOES happen in online forums daily.

Lastly, although this type of abuse occurs virtually, the **impact** on the victim, their loved ones, and community can be just as harmful as sexual violence committed in person. Please trust me; I speak from experience.

Please vote on these bills immediately and help make the internet safer for some of Michigan’s most vulnerable.

Kindly,

Dawn and Mark Hayes